Mental Ability - 1926

NORDICS HAVE NOT SUPERIOR INTELLIGENCE

Test Of 5000 School Children Of Many Races Reveals Darker Races On Equal Level

NEW YORK, Oct. 27— (Special release) — Are the "blond Nordics" really superior mentally? Hot discussion has raged over this for many years, and now a scientist has been trying to find out something definite about it by testing 5,500 New England school children of foreign-born parents, of many different races.

The Nordic is not intellectually superior to the darker races. Such is the conclusion that this scientist Dr. Nathaniel M. Hirsch, formerly a fellow of the National Research council draws from his tests.

Nordic Blood No Test

Polish Jews averaged the highest in intelligence, the next in order being Swedes, English, Russian Jews, Germans, Americans, Lithuanians, Irish, British, Canadians, Russians, Poles, Greeks, Italians, French Canadians, Negroes and Portuguese. The children tested were all attending public schools in four factory towns of Massachusetts with the exception of 449 colored children from Tennessee.

"The intelligence of the national groups showed that there is no connection between high intelligence and the possession of so-called Nordic blood," said Dr. Hirsch. "The eight national groups that were superior in intelligence consisted of two national groups that have been called Nordic, the English and Swedes; two groups that have been thought to possess 60 per cent or more of Alpine blood, the Germans and Lithuanians; two quasi-national groups of Jews; one quasi-national group of so-called Mediterranean blood, the Irish, and one national bloods, the Americans."

HOW NATIVES THINK.

How Natives Think. By Professor Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. Translated by Lilian A. Clare. London: Allen and Unwin, Limited. Pp. 392. 12s. 6d. net.

The above is the snappy title under which has been translated Professor Lévy-Bruhl's "Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures." This is an earlier work than the same author's "Primitive Mentality," which was translated into English a few years ago. The present work presents the author's essential theories and principles.

The essence of Lévy-Bruhl's theory is that the beliefs and customs of primitive peoples are to be explained as products of "collective thinking," a pre-logical, socially determined kind of thinking which is in complete contrast with the thinking characteristic of civilised man—*i.e.*, logical thinking in strictly defined concepts. All other anthropological interpretations of primitive beliefs and behaviour, such as the animism of Tylor, are attributed by Professor Lévy-Bruhl to the error of supposing that the mental processes of primitive man are the same as our own.

It will readily be admitted that it is futile to attempt to explain the origin of primitive beliefs by inventing purely logical processes of thought by which we imagine that they might have been reached. This, however, is also true (although in a lesser degree) of most of the beliefs of a civilised man. Our belief in the electro-magnetic theory of light may be entirely accounted for by the logical and mathematical arguments by which we should justify it. A civilised man's political and religious beliefs and many of his economic and psychological theories cannot, however, be explained without references to the practical needs to which they are adjustments and to the emotional elements which form part of their meaning.

The logical thought processes of the civilised man which Lévy-Bruhl contrasts with the pre-logical thinking of the primitive is an unbelievable fiction which would have been at home in the psychological atmosphere of fifty years ago. Thought processes are not themselves logical. The laws of logic are not a description of the way we think, but of what we have to do to the product of our thinking in order to make it yield true results.

If this is admitted, Professor Lévy-Bruhl's claim to have discovered a primitive pre-logical thinking different from our own in kind and not merely in degree falls to the ground. The author may be right in his estimate of how natives think; he is certainly wrong in his opinion of how we think. It remains true, of course, that the study of beliefs which are direct products of thinking dominated by practical and emotional needs is a subject of great interest and importance. The subject matter of this study is to be found in the Arunta's beliefs about his churinga, and in the average British citizen's beliefs about the Constitution. Towards this study Professor Lévy-Bruhl has made an interesting and valuable collection of facts.

R. H. T.

Plan Association to Study African Mind

An Association for the Study of African Languages is projected, according to J. Withers Gill, writing in the British Empire Supplement of The Outlook, of London, September 4, and the work of such an association he holds could not fail to throw light upon African psychology.

"The conditions under which the mind of a typical African Negro works appear to us in a topsy-turvy light," writes Mr. Gill. "In material matters he is shrewd, sullen and childish; in spiritual matters he dwells in a state of mystic. Put down in a native court of jurisdiction, where the procedure is in the hands of a tribal chief and his counsellors, and where the case law' is represented by some oral tradition or more often by a familiar folk talk.

"You will marvel at the simple practical justice of the verdict, which may frequently be according to what the lion said or the elephant did in some worn-out fable culled from the lore of the folk. How much more genuine and effective is the equity of these judgments than those given under the elaborate procedure of alien courts adapted to a different stage of civilization where a high standard of evidence is imposed! Evidence of this latter character is readily obtained by cajolery or purchase at so much a head. With ease it deceives the European but not the native judge who knows the mentality of his fellow men.

"Talk to natives in their own tongue, free from the restraints of official etiquette, and the shrewdness of their arguments and the keenness of their insight into the mental processes of their fellows will astonish you. . . . If the superior person would descend from his pedestal he would learn a lot about African mentality, which would profoundly modify plans designed for his moral betterment."

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White and Black Intelligence.

The relative level of intelligence of the White and Black races is a question that has been much discussed recently in South Africa. It is in fact one of more than academic importance, because on the views which are held on the subject depend to a large extent the practical justification of particular Native policies, and the general outlook on the whole question of the relationship between the two races in this country. It is to be feared, however, that the polemics which have been filling columns of the South African Press, characterised as they have been by very sharp divergent points of view, have so far yielded little of value, and it is clear that the small group of controversialists have had no solid foundations to work upon. Dr. A. M. Moll, who uncompromisingly proclaimed the mental and moral racial inferiority of the Black man, did so in language which was curiously suggestive of the forms used by the more extreme upholders of Segregation and all its works, thereby vitiating from the start any value attaching to his quasi-scientific approach of the subject. Dr. Edgar Brookes, the protagonist of the opposite point of view, spoke out of the fulness of his heart as a Segregationist, who advocates the policy because he believes that it will give the Native the best chance to rise more rapidly in the scale of civilised development—a faith denounced as utterly illusory by Dr. Moll, who wants Segregation only as a confession that the idea of leading the Native along the path of the White man's civilisation has failed. Both expressed their fundamentally divergent standpoints with the same vehement dogmatism, and thereby showed the weakness of their positions. For if there is one question on which, however much dogmatism is desirable, it is less easy to be dogmatic, it is this question of the relative intelligence and inherent mental capacity of races.

AMERICAN INVESTIGATIONS.

In the United States, where the subject has been a good deal studied in recent years, under conditions more favourable than any which exist or are even likely to exist in South Africa, no clear-cut results have so far flowed from the many practical experiments which have been conducted by able and skilled investigators. A bibliography on the subject prepared by the United States Department of Labour gives some idea of the character of the work which has been done in this connection, and the diversity of the conclusions reached should prove to the South African amateur theorists on the subject, the truth of the old adage about discretion and valour and the folly of rushing in where circumspect walking is indicated. Probably the most important, and certainly the most comprehensive American investigations were made by Dr. W. J. Mayo, of New York, who in 1913 published the result of his inquiries. Dr. Mayo's general conclusion is that the average mental ability of the White man is higher than that of the Negro, but not a great deal higher, and that mental variability in the White race is somewhat more pronounced than in the Black man. These conclusions were supported generally by the Army intelligence tests which were conducted by the American military

authorities during the War, but both Dr. Mayo's and the Army tests have been severely criticised by many American writers on the subject, who have thrown a good deal of doubt on the reliability of these tests.

SCHOOL TESTS.

A series of tests made in the schools of Columbia about the same time as Dr. Mayo's investigations led, however, to a somewhat similar conclusion—it was found that the Negro children were mentally younger and different from White children. Broadly, this result was borne out also by tests similar, though not necessarily conducted on the same principles, made in the public schools of Philadelphia and in other States. The Philadelphia inquiry found a greater degree of retardation of intelligence among Negro children than among Whites, and the conclusion was that the fundamental difference of the Negro's mind must be kept in view in any educational policy that has to provide for the two races. One investigation made in 1915 appeared to indicate that in general the mentality of Negro children was rated about two-th[illegible]s that of Whites, and similar measu[illegible]ents made in 1913 by the Univer[illegible] South Carolina, on the basis of the Binet-Simon intelligence scale, yielded the conclusion that Coloured children were mentally younger than White children of the same physical age.

ANOTHER VIEW.

So far the evidence has all been in favour of the proposition that the Black is mentally inferior to the White. But other American inquiries have not only suggested a modification of that positive point of view, but have also advanced the contention that the Negro possesses a mental make-up and qualities which are either not different from that of the White, or, if they are different, are not necessarily inferior. That is to some extent the conclusion reached in an article in the "Scientific Monthly" in March, 1925, which holds, from examination of students in an American university institution, that no race is superior, though races may vary in their possession of certain qualities. Another writer states that while the Negro may lack the mental grasp of the White man, in his own sphere—the concrete, the practical and the tangible—he is superior to his White fellow. Some writers doubt the possibiity of using intelligence tests as a reliable measure of racial superiority, though they may be useful in individual cases.

AN INDUSTRIAL INQUIRY.

A more definite and more practical statement on the subject is contained in an investigation made in the Cleveland district, a highly industrialised area. The aim of the inquiry was to ascertain how far the Southern Negro, who was just then rapidly invading American industry, was suited by natural aptitude for the complex and specialised tasks of modern industrialism. The conclusion was that the Negro had not failed in any class of work in which he had been given a fair trial. This opinion is cited not by any means as a decisive one, but is an indication of the practical difficulty of applying the results of theoretical intelligence tests to the actual facts of the economic life, the experience of which appears to contradict the theories. At any rate the need is shown for a good deal more research into the question than has been possible to the South African controversialists on the subject, before practical policies are influenced by theories of relative levels of racial mental qualities.

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COLORED CHILDREN NOT QUITE NORMAL

(By Science Service)

Colored school children do not come up to the average of intelligence shown by white children, according to a survey made in the public schools of Oklahoma City. The investigation, which was made by L. D. Lacy, director of research, was undertakin "for the purpose of increasing understanding of the children in the schoolroom and for the purpose of classification, rather than as an experimental study."

In the Binet-Simon intelligence tests the colored children of the kindergarten and first three primary grades average 91 as compared with 103 by white children, Mr. Lacy reports. One hundred is the standard of intelligence for each age. In the higher grades, five to 12, the mental ability of the colored children averages 82 as compared with 100 averaged by white children. In these grades the standard used was the Otis Self Administering Test of Mental Ability. In all, 317 colored children were tested.

These figures are not to be taken as an exact rating of the intelligence of negro children, Mr. Lacy points out, because of the large number of retarded colored pupils.

"It must be remembered," he explains, "that as the higher grades are reached, the group becomes a highly selected group rather than an unselected group because of the high percentage of retardation in the colored schools."

Editorial

OUR SOCIAL HERITAGE

We often pride our race, our blood, our color and hair, our nation and country too highly. There is nothing inherently great in any of these. Southern races, backward races, have proven themselves capable of producing just as much genius as other races. Children of the most primitive races have been taken, early in life, into new and more congenial environments and they have proven themselves equal in ability and in intellect to the brightest minds which our civilization has produced. And again, we find among our own civilization some of the dullest intellects, some of the most morally depraved people that exist on any part of the globe. Volumes could be written to prove that we, as a nation, have nothing for which to lord ourselves over other nations and other people, save OUR SOCIAL HERITAGE.

Above all else that our foreparents have left us, our social inheritance counts for most. There has been handed down to us an accumulation of experiences and knowledge of millions of years, years in which some were spent blindly and perhaps aimlessly, yet instinctively groping upwards and towards the light. There were ages in which men knew no science, as such, yet they struggled to gain the mastery of the elements. of nature and of themselves. And now for a long period of time there has been an age of purposive, intelligent struggle (assisted by science) on the part of our ancestors, to find a way to live peaceably and happy, to assist his kinsmen to work with nature and to control nature. Each generation has the advantage over the preceding one. To-day this circle has so broadened that greater socialized man thinks and acts, not so much in terms of self, or family, or race, or nation. Rather he considers himself a citizen of the world and he therefore dreams dreams and thinks thoughts and performs deeds by which all the world shall be benefitted.

What then is our greatest duty to our kinsmen, to the whole race? It is that we shall pass on this social heritage to our posterity fuller, richer and sweeter. our greatest duty is our reason for having been born into the world is that we shall make this world a better place in which to live, that we should make it more beautiful and just a little nearer to perfection, to the "millennium". If the social heritage which was left us has not been made richer and fuller, if the world has not been made a better world by our having lived here, then lives have been miserable failures. This is a better test of success than the amount of money we have accumulated. It is also a better test than the noise we have made. This was the meaning of ALL of Christ's teaching and this is the meaning of life.

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Two commedians in a local vaudeville made a hit with a song, the burden of which was that none of us knows what life is all about. The funny men aptly used various incidents common to the lives of all of us, ending with the refrain, to the effect that the actors in that stupendous drama we know as life were in complete ignorance of the significance of their roles.

The audience laughed. Possibly some thought of the profound truth in the song. None of us do know what life really means. We are born, but we know not why. We grow up, marry, have children, make fools of ourselves in various ways, work, weep, laugh, try to pose as possessors of great wisdom, and finally die, still not knowing what it is all about. Such is the aspect of life, from what man can learn by actual experience. To find its real significance, he must turn to God. He knows, and will reveal all in His good time.

—ANON